



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CALIFORNIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
HQ 579TH ENGINEER BATTALION
1500 ARMORY DRIVE
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95401-4389

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11 July 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Operation Ready Families Program

1. **References.**

- a. AR 608-24, Family Assistance Network
- b. AR 600-23, Non Discrimination in Federally Assisted Programs
- c. DA Pam 360-525: Family Assistance Handbook for Mobilization
- d. DA Pam 608-43: A Guide to Family Member Pre-Deployment Briefings
- e. DA Pam 608-47: A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups
- f. CAL ARNG Reg 600-14, California National Guard Family Assistance Program

2. **Purpose.** To educate, inform and support the guard members and their families during their affiliation with the 579th Engineer Battalion. To emphasize the vital role families play in the 579th Engineer Battalion's ability to accomplish its mission, and to ensure that the guard members and their families are prepared for mobilization. This is accomplished by:

- a. Developing a functional communication network between the commander, soldiers and families.
- b. Disseminating information about our mission, benefits and entitlements;
- c. Developing formal and informal support network between families;
- d. Increasing family preparedness for mobilization and separation; and
- e. Improving battalion's recruiting and retention efforts.

3. **Responsibilities.**

a. The Commander ensures that the battalion has an active valid program, by ensuring Commanders at all levels throughout the Battalion meet the following minimum requirements:

- Written concept of how their program will be administered;
- Appointment of military and volunteer points of contact (POC);
- Command emphasis on the Ready Families Program activities;

- Ongoing communication with Military and Volunteer POCs; and
 - Command leadership and guidance for the Ready Families Program.
- b. The Military POC is a soldier of sufficient rank in the Battalion who:
- Is appointed as an additional duty to support the Family Readiness Volunteer Coordinator (FRVC);
 - Advises the Commander on all matters concerning the Ready Families Program; and
 - Coordinates and communicates the Commander's concerns, desires and activities to the volunteers and vice versa.
- c. The Senior Command Volunteer Coordinator is the leader of the chain of concern for the Battalion, and is a non-military spouse, family member or other interested party. All designated Ready Families Volunteers are:
- Appointed by the Commander to advise and assist the Battalion Headquarters, the Companies and Detachments within the Battalion;
 - The point of contact for all family members and volunteers within their respective command;
 - Represents the Commander and ensures the Ready Families Program activities are in accordance with the Commander's desires and family member expressed needs;
 - Encourages development of the "Chain of Concern" at all levels within their organization;
 - Advises the Commander on all matters involving the Ready Families Program; and
 - Visits with each Battalion Family Readiness Volunteer at least twice a year, and coordinates efforts to make a successful program.
- d. Commands' respective full-time personnel will provide expert administrative assistance to the Ready Families Volunteer.

4. Organization. The Ready Families Volunteers throughout the Battalion will be in line with the Military Family point of contacts (POC). This means that the chain of concern will mirror the military chain of command. This is important for structural purposes, and so the volunteers do not get overwhelmed with supporting multiple command-level organizations. To make this work, communication has to be two-way, from and to, commanders and families via the Ready Families Volunteer and the Military Family POC.

5. Goals. The primary goal of the 579th Engineer Battalion's Ready Families Program is to increase the combat readiness of the Battalion and its subordinate units. This will be accomplished by:

- a. Increasing the family members' knowledge of the mission of the California National Guard and their understanding of the duties performed by the soldiers in the 579th Engineer Battalion;
- b. Improving the quality of life for the service members and the families by creating a bond among the families and between service members and the families;

- c. Increasing the family members' awareness of their entitlements;
- d. Establish pre- and post-mobilization family assistance support requirements, responsibilities, and resources and procedures to support the overall mission of the California National Guard;
- e. Establishing a "Chain of Concern" between the Command, the service members and their families; and
- f. Enhance readiness of service members and their families and contribute to the overall morale and welfare.

6. **Concept.** A Ready Families Program is essential to the readiness of the 579th Engineer Battalion. A soldier cannot be effective if he is worried about the welfare of his/her family. Accordingly, a strong and effective Ready Families Program is a force multiplier.

a. Unit Commanders are required by regulation to implement and sustain a Ready Families Program in their commands. A Ready Families Program consists of service members and volunteers who "own" it. It will only be as good as they make it.

b. A Ready Families Program is not a social club or fund-raising body. It is an integral component to the overall readiness of the 579th Engineer Battalion. In the event of mobilization for either state or federal missions, the Ready Families Program allows loved ones left behind to "stand alone" and provide support for each other while allowing the soldier to concentrate on the mission at hand. During normal operations and training, the Ready Families Program provides support to the Commander's goals and objectives for the training year.

7. **Funds.**

a. Fund raising will be in accordance with reference 1d above, and only on an as needed basis for a specific event.

b. Resources such as copy, fax and government mailing are to be facilitated. Space will be made for bulletin boards and/or display areas for Ready Families Program information within the armory.

c. All Ready Families Program Volunteers and any other designated volunteers are to be reimbursed for mileage and telephone calls for sanctioned activities. All reimbursements must be pre-approved by the Commander and the State Operation Ready Families Program.

8. **Essential Activities.** Just as a Unit has a Mission Essential Task List (METL) the Ready Families Program has a task list that it must meet to be successful. The essential tasks that support the Ready Families Program include:

a. Establishing and maintaining a Ready Families Program binder. This binder is a Standardized and inspectable item. It contains specific documents and information critical to the success of the program. Some information contained in this binder is Privacy Act data and is handled accordingly.

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b. Ensuring that every dependent is enrolled in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS) and that every eligible family member has a current dependent identification card.

c. Establishing and maintaining an Outreach Program to familiarize existing soldiers and their families with the unit. This program is intended to increase family members' knowledge of the mission of the California National Guard, their understanding of the duties performed by the soldiers in the battalion and their knowledge of benefits and entitlements.

d. Establishing and maintaining a Sponsor Program to familiarize new soldiers and their families with the unit and inform about the Outreach Program. Conducting a minimum of two (2)-training activities per year. This activity will include a benefits briefing, information update and social event. This event will be included into the yearly training calendar and places on the training schedule.

9. **Volunteer Recognition Program.** The 579th Engineer Battalion is committed to recognizing the efforts of its Ready Families Program volunteers as they help support the unit's mission and contribute to its readiness. They are eligible to receive Certificates of Appreciation, State Awards and the Adjutant General's Award for Family Readiness Excellence.

10. **Training Meetings.** All members of the Ready Families Program are encouraged to attend Battalion and State sponsored training meetings.

11. **Resources.**

a. Additional support can be found through the Family Assistance Centers for California. They are located throughout the state. See enclosure for location and POC information.

b. The State Operation Ready Families Program Coordinator can provide support and resource information. The POC is:

Mr. Steve Read
State Ready Families Coordinator
State of California, Office of the Adjutant General
9800 Goethe Road, PO Box 269101
Sacramento, CA 9582-9101
(800) 449-9662
Email: ready_families@is.ca.ngb.army.mil

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